



Administrative Office of Courts

ACDD, MIS, Juvenile, & Traffic Divisions

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

Welcome

Volume 1, Issue 11, February 2006

In this issue, we have reported more news about the new Alafile system, recognized some key employees who have retired after many years of service to the Judicial System, and acknowledged the accomplishments of one of our newest divisions. The Chief Justice was also presented with the E-Drayton award for his many accomplishments in the area of technology.

We really appreciate all of your feedback and as always, if you have any special news or announcements that you would like featured, please email us at newsletter@alacourt.gov.

The Huntsville Times

Court computers to save lawyers time

Saturday, December 17, 2005

By DAVID HOLDEN

Times Staff Writer dholden@htimes.com

New electronic filing system allows 24-hour service

The lawyer's mad dash to the courthouse to file legal papers before 5 o'clock will soon be a thing of the past in Madison County.

Beginning in January, attorneys will be able to file from their offices lawsuits, divorce cases and accompanying motions and papers any time of the day or night.

The court system trained 150 lawyers on the new system this week in the Salmon Library computer laboratory at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

The state Administrative Office of Courts has chosen Madison County to join a pilot program, said Circuit Clerk Jane Smith. The project takes the court closer to a paperless storage system.

Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Drayton Nabers wants 80 percent of court business statewide to be conducted electronically by the end of 2006.

Electronic filing will immediately eliminate most of the paper that flows into the court, Nabers said in a phone interview. Filing court papers by computer will reduce the need for large areas of storage space and increase the efficiency of court employees by as much as 20 percent, he said.

Statewide, the court system is about 25 percent below its manpower level but hiring more employees is not an option, Nabers said. So, officials have to find ways to make workers more efficient, he said.

The circuit court in Baldwin County already allows lawyers to file lawsuits electronically, said Mike Carroll, information technology director for the Administrative Office of Courts. The agency has monitored the pilot program there since October, he said.

Over the next few months, the court will conduct several more training sessions for the 700 lawyers in Huntsville, Carroll said.

The new electronic filing system, called AlaFile, will make the court system more efficient for those who use it, he said.

Also, said attorney Randy Gladden, electronic filing will reduce the cost of mailing documents to opposing lawyers in lawsuits. "I can now serve them electronically," he said.

Technically, the circuit clerk's office is supposed to be open 24 hours a day, Gladden said. But the courthouse closes at 5 p.m.

Many times, with a deadline looming at midnight, lawyers have called Smith at home at the 11th hour to file court papers, he said. "The electronic filing will save her or a clerk a trip to the courthouse at night."

[Continued on Page 2](#)



Alabama Judicial Building
300 Dexter Avenue
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Newsletter Spotlight

Welcome

Birthdays

Technology in the News

Courthouse News

Survey

E-Drayton Award

Tax Intercept

Celebrations!

March Birthdays

| | |
|----------------|----|
| Ramona Brown | 4 |
| Alicia Cannon | 5 |
| Steve Leveque | 18 |
| Ed Johnson | 27 |
| Karen Trussell | 27 |
| Larry Forston | 28 |



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TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

Graceful exit

By Regina Grayson

Luverne Journal

Monday, January 30, 2006 12:04 PM CST

Ann Tate, Crenshaw County Circuit Clerk, has announced that she will not seek re-election. She is currently completing her fourth term in office, which will end Jan. of 2007. At that time, Tate will have served 24 years as Circuit Clerk.

Tate, who is originally from Coffee County, was elected as Circuit Clerk in 1982 and took office in 1983. Tate's husband, Morris, is originally from Glenwood, and the couple moved to the area in 1976 when he became the engineer for Crenshaw County. They have been married for 39 years.

Having been in the Circuit Clerk's office since 1983, Tate admits that she has seen several changes over the years. One of these includes a 60 percent increase in court case filings since 1983. These cases include anything from traffic cases and divorce cases to child support cases.

"That's not an unusual load for Crenshaw County," Tate said. "It's happening everywhere."

However, Tate points out that she only has three full-time employees and one part-time employee currently on staff, the same number she had in 1984.

Another big change Tate has seen over her years of serving as Circuit Clerk is a 200 percent increase in the amount of money collected.

"We currently collect approximately \$1.5 million a year, whereas in 1983, we were only handling about \$375,000."

As she points out the increase in the workload while operating with the same number of staff members since 1983, Tate brings out the third biggest change she has seen in her office.

"In 1983, all of the record-keeping was manual," she said. "Now, everything is computer-based. And, we are currently imaging records so we can retrieve them electronically." Tate said that the Circuit Clerk's office was also on the verge of offering options for attorneys to electronically file documents.

"The computer has helped us tremendously with keeping up with the increases in the work load over the years," Tate said.

When it comes to the success of her staff and office, Tate gives three specific reasons.

"First and foremost, we work for the public, for everyone who walks through that door," she said. "We serve the public. That's why we're here."

And, with all of the changes and developments in technology, Tate said that the Circuit Clerk's office has been willing to make the necessary changes in order to keep up with and to advance their own systems.

Also, Tate and her office staff have taken advantage of every resource for advanced training, including participating in continuing education courses.

When it comes to her staff, Tate sings their praises and deeply appreciates all of the hard work they have done for her and for the Circuit Clerk's office.

"Any official is only as good as the people who work for you," she said. "I can't say enough good things about these ladies."

The staff in the Circuit Clerk's office consists of Jeannie Gibson, Twyla Smith, Sherrie Sipper and Julie Sanders.

When it comes to making plans for her retirement, Tate is looking forward to spending more time with her family, especially her four grandchildren.

"I love to travel, read and scrapbook," she said. "Plus, I look forward to spending more time in my church activities."

Tate also plans to stay very involved in the Crenshaw County Domestic Violence Task Force.

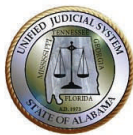
"I am so grateful to the citizens of Crenshaw County for allowing me this privilege to serve them," she said. "I am certainly going to miss working with the public and with all of the agencies we serve."

Tate and her husband, Morris, have three married sons and four grandchildren.

Their son, Jim Tate, is the pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Brantley. Their son, Will Tate, is employed with J.W.M. Engineering in Luverne, and their son, Matt Tate, is currently serving on active duty with his National Guard unit in Iraq.



Crenshaw County Circuit Clerk Ann Tate has announced her retirement, effective Jan. of 2007. Tate is very grateful to the citizens of Crenshaw County for allowing her the privilege to serve them for 24 years.



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TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

Survey for Circuit Clerks

In the November Edition, we featured a section called *Did You Know?*. In this section, we introduce little-known State agencies that file cases at the courthouses. If you have had a case filed recently and you have not heard of the agency before, email us at newsletter@alacourt.gov. We will research it and put the information in an upcoming newsletter. This will help all the courthouses become familiar with these filers.



The Alabama Circuit Clerks Association presented Nabers with a new award created in his honor. The E-Drayton Award, a mahogany and bronze plaque, was given to recognize Nabers' efforts to establish electronic filing of documents in the state court.



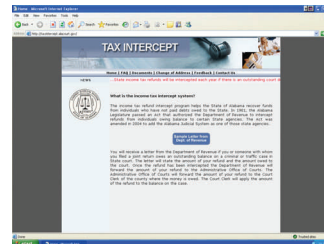
Income Tax Refund Intercept

In 1981, the Alabama Legislature passed an Act authorizing the Department of Revenue to intercept state tax refunds from individuals owing monies to certain state agencies. This act was codified into Section 40-18-100, Code of Alabama, 1975. This statute was amended in 2004 by Act #2004-505 to add the Alabama Judicial System to the list of agencies that are authorized recipients of intercepted state tax refund monies.

To take advantage of this Act, the Unified Judicial System's Income Tax Refund Intercept Program was initiated in 2005 for the 2004 tax year. The UJS provides the Department of Revenue with a list of names and social security numbers of people delinquent in the payment of court ordered payments. As income tax refunds are processed, the Department of Revenue matches them with the UJS delinquent payment listing.

The Department of Revenue transfers the refunds to the Administrative Office of Courts which in turn electronically transfers them to the appropriate circuit clerk's office. The circuit clerk's offices are notified of the amounts transferred and the cases to which the money should be applied. The refund recipient is notified by the Department of Revenue that their income tax refund has been intercepted, along with the reason for the interception.

The income tax refund intercept program was very successful in 2005, netting the Unified Judicial System over 1.3 million dollars in delinquent court ordered payments. A website has been developed to provide the public with information about Income Tax Refund Intercept Program at <http://taxintercept.alacourt.gov>. This website is used to facilitate the exchange of information between the Administrative Office of Courts and the circuit clerk's offices concerning the interception and applications of the income tax intercept monies.



Gloria Wardell retired after 29 years with the UJS. Her most recent position was with ACDD.



Jimmy Blackwell served the UJS for over 25 years. He was a Sr. Applications Manager with AOC.



ACDD celebrates its 5-year anniversary!

As of January 31, 2006, ACDD had processed almost \$600 million in payments.

Save time with quick computer shortcuts

<http://www.microsoft.com/athome/moredone/compshortcuts.msp>